

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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PAUL V. HYER

CANCELLATION OF SEALINGS

The KEYS of the kingdom of heaven, conferred upon Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:19) and restored to the earth in recent times (D&C 110) by the prophet ELIJAH, who was custodian of this power anciently (see Mal. 4:5–6), include the AUTHORITY to “bind and loose” on earth, with corresponding effect in heaven. Currently this power is held and exercised only by the PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH and others upon whom it is conferred by him or at his direction. Once a sealing ORDINANCE is performed, only the First Presidency can approve a change in sealing status, including the cancellation of a sealing (*General Handbook of Instructions*, 6-5 through 6-7).

The First Presidency may cancel temple sealings when the circumstances of a request for cancellation warrant it.

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RONALD E. POELMAN

SECOND COMFORTER

See: Jesus Christ, Second Comforter

SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

[*The second coming of Jesus Christ refers to his return to the earth in glory to reign as King of Kings, as contrasted to his first coming as an infant in Bethlehem. Articles relevant to this topic are David, Prophetic Figure of Last Days; Dispensation of the Fulness of Times; Jesus Christ: Second Coming of Jesus Christ; Marriage Supper of the Lamb; Messiah: Messianic Concept and Hope; Millennium; Parables; Restoration of All Things.*

Both the first and second appearances were foretold in the scriptures, with the second advent to be accompanied by earthshaking events of worldwide consequence. See Armageddon; Joseph Smith—Matthew; Last Days; Malachi, Prophecies of.]

SECOND ESTATE

“Second estate” is a Latter-day Saint term that refers to mankind’s mortal existence on this earth. In scripture it occurs only in the writings of ABRAHAM (Abr. 3:26), but the preearth life of spirits is called “their first estate” in Jude 1:6. Latter-day Saints believe that through the process of BIRTH, the spirit children of God who kept their FIRST ESTATE (premortal) enter into their second estate by receiving a PHYSICAL BODY with additional opportunities for experience and development. MORTALITY is then a probationary period in which individuals “prepare to meet God” (Alma 12:24). In the final JUDGMENT all MANKIND will “be judged of their works . . . which were done by the temporal body in their days of probation” (1 Ne. 15:32; cf. Alma 12:14). All who receive the saving principles and ORDINANCES of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST (including FAITH, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST, ordination to the PRIESTHOOD for men, ENDOWMENT, and eternal MARRIAGE) and seek to live righteous and useful lives, embracing the FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL, will obtain the complete blessings of the ATONEMENT of Jesus Christ. All who had no opportunity to do so during earth life will have it in the postmortal spirit world (1 Pet. 3:18–19; 4:6; D&C 138:36–37). Every person who has lived on the earth will be resurrected with perfected corporeal bodies, and those who have kept the commandments will enter into ETERNAL LIFE, and “have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abr. 3:26).

ALEXANDER L. BAUGH

SECRET COMBINATIONS

In latter-day scriptures, secret combinations are groups of conspirators who plot and initiate “works of darkness” for evil and selfish purposes. Secret combinations have existed since the days of Cain (Moses 5:51). Satan is their author (2 Ne. 26:22), power and gain are their motives (Ether 8:15, 25), and conspiracy is their method of operation (Hel. 6:22–24). Secret combinations may be brotherhoods, groups, societies, or governments. They operate in secrecy to perform evil acts for the purpose of gaining power over the minds and actions of people.

As the enemies of honest men and women governed by the rule of law, such secret combinations seek to subvert public virtue and legally constituted authority. They defile, defraud, murder, deceive, and destroy the elements of good government, religious or secular. Their goal is to seize power and to rule over all the people (3 Ne. 6:27–30), which results in the destruction of human freedom and agency and the paralysis of peaceful and just communities.

Secret combinations and their practices have a scriptural and historic tradition that extends from the days of Cain's secret covenant with Satan to modern times. Members of these Satanic combinations are bound by secret oaths and covenants. The DEVIL proclaims, initiates, and sustains these combinations and their conspiratorial practices (Moses 5:29–33, 47–52).

In the Book of Mormon, several secret combinations challenged governments ruled by the “voice of the people” or by righteous kings. They were a continuing threat to the Jaredites, who succumbed eventually to their power. Later, they were a threat to the Nephite and Lamanite nations when the Gadianton combinations, over a period of many years, challenged the constituted authorities and eventually seized power. The concerted effort of the whole populace later defeated the Gadiantons, but others rose in their place. The Book of Mormon details the tactics and strategies of the Gadiantons, mentions a variety of countermeasures, and shows that a secret combination was responsible for the final downfall of the Nephites (Hel. 2:13–14; Ether 8:21; *see also* BOOK OF MORMON: HELAMAN *and* BOOK OF MORMON: 3 NEPHI).

In the contemporary world, secret combinations take various forms and operate at different levels of society. They are expressed in organized crime and in religious, economic, and political conspiracies. The Lord has warned that secret combinations will be present in modern society (D&C 38:29; Ether 8:20–25). They threaten freedom everywhere. However, Latter-day Saints believe that secret combinations and their practices can be overcome, but only through righteous living and full support of honest government.

Secret combinations are often referred to in latter-day scripture, particularly in the book of Moses and the Book of Mormon. In the Doctrine and Covenants, this term describes those who have conspired against the Saints (D&C 42:64). It

does not appear in the Bible, but the equivalent “conspiracy” is used at least ten times.

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RAY C. HILLAM

SECT

In ordinary usage the word “sect” refers to any body of followers or adherents, ranging from the main religions of the world to small groups of heretics. “Sect” derives from the Latin *sequi*, to follow. In sociological terminology, a sect is a separately organized religious group that meets specified criteria. Technically, this term does not adequately describe The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

As defined by social scientists, three criteria are central in determining whether a religious group is a sect: (1) a sect is organizationally simple; (2) it stands in high tension with the dominant society (typically because sect members view themselves as a “faithful remnant” of the pure religion that has been rejected by society); and (3) it views itself as uniquely legitimate, the sole source of salvation. Applying these criteria to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not always easy. With respect to these factors, the organizational structure of the LDS Church is obviously complex and international in scope. While the nineteenth-century commitment to building a literal political and economic kingdom and the practice of plural marriage placed the LDS Church in tension with its host societies, neither of these practices sociologically characterize the twentieth-century Church. In fact, the Church has always embraced many values central to the dominant value systems of the United States and other host countries, including an emphasis on family, hard work, and national loyalty. Nevertheless, moderate tension